

CONSIDERATIONS ③

For the USE of

Young Men,

AND

THE PARENTS

OF

YOUNG MEN.

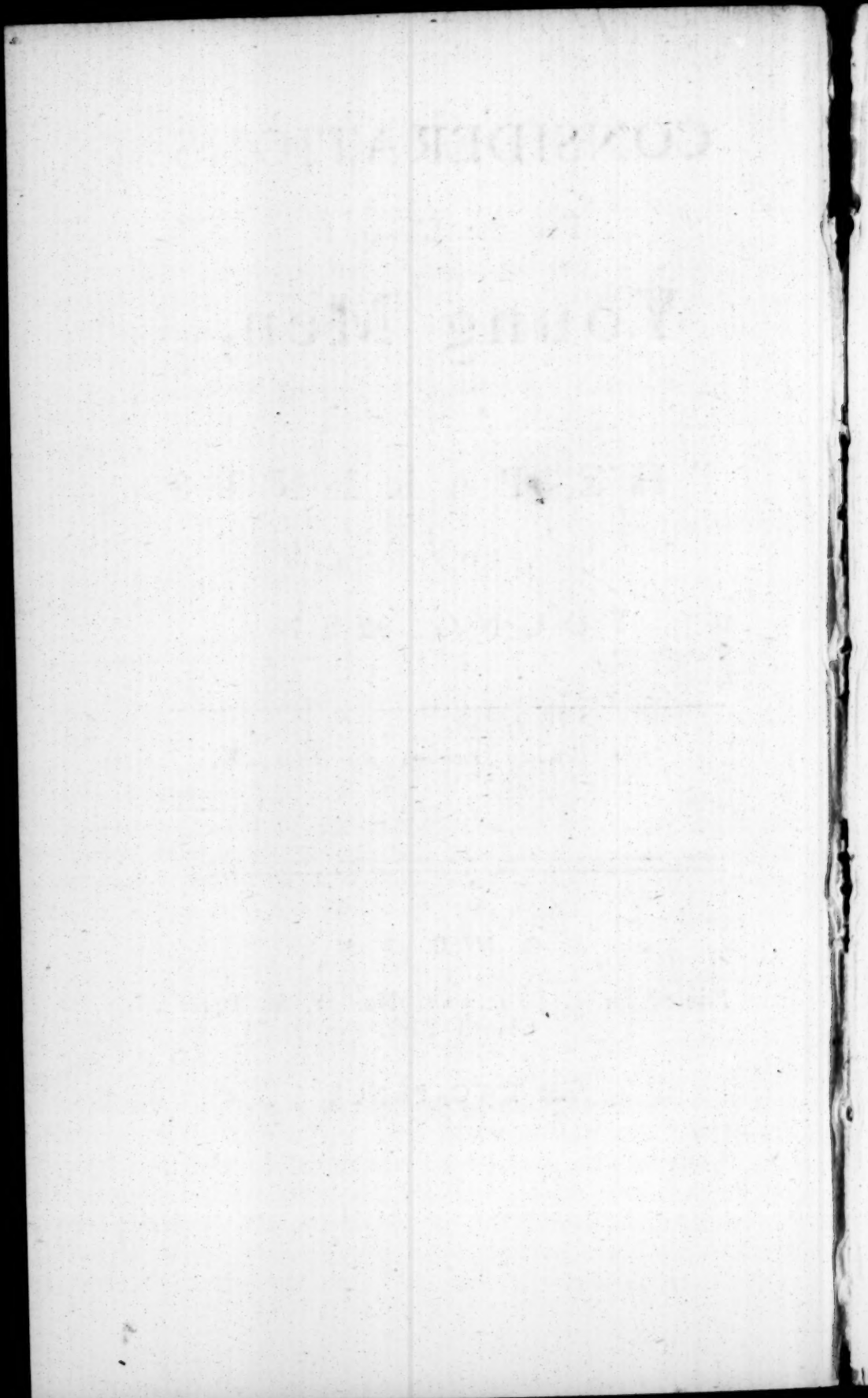
Sperne voluptatem ; nocet empty dolore voluptas.

CATO. —

L O N D O N :

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CONSIDERATIONS

For the USE of

YOUNG MEN, &c.

IT is a maxim too prevalent at this day, that little inconvenience arises to young men, or to the society, from *simple fornication*; and therefore that, if it be a vice at all, it is one of the lowest kind, and such as may be indulged to youth, in order to prevent the greater evil of improper engagements for life.

On the other hand, it appears to me, that young men do both themselves and the society very great injury by this irregular indulgence of their passions; and that the evils in which they, thereby, involve themselves are often irremediable; whereas the inconvenience they, by that means, avoid, is generally very trifling, if it be any inconvenience at all. This I shall endeavour to demonstrate in the following observations.

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I. The

1. The mutual inclination of the sexes, if it was not accelerated by an improper conduct of the mind, as by enflaming the imagination, with reading, exhibitions, &c. and by neglecting the acquisition of useful knowledge, as well as by an improper diet and want of sufficient exercise with respect to the body, and in general by giving no attention to laudable and vigorous pursuits, would not discover itself so early as it now generally does; and when it did discover itself, the rational faculties being more advanced, it might be restrained within proper bounds, without real inconvenience.

A redundancy of natural vigour is by no means useless, though it be not employed in the manner in which it is evident that nature intended it should ultimately be employed; since it contributes to make all the powers of the man, those of the mind as well as those of the body, more vigorous; qualifying him to exert himself in any undertaking with that spirit and effect which is expected from youth, and youth only; whereas excessive venery, especially in early life, debilitates exceedingly, and accelerates the languor and infirmities of old age: and promiscuous commerce enflames the passions, and excites to excessive gratification much more than the society of one only.

Besides when persons have become addicted to venery, they often persist in the practice, not from any real satisfaction they have in it, as
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the gratification of a natural passion (since they sometimes continue the pursuit when the capacity of enjoyment is wholly extinct) but merely in consequence of *habit*; just as a person may continue to smoke, or chew tobacco, when it gives him no real pleasure, but perhaps pain. Now, though, with respect to the mind, there is often the greatest difficulty in breaking habits of this kind, there is no real injury sustained by it. When the want is altogether imaginary, the disappointment can only affect the imagination and fancy. On these accounts, the plea that is often used for venereal indulgence, as if the constitution required it, is generally mere pretence; and men would, in fact, have in all respects, more enjoyment of life without it.

2. It must, and will be acknowledged, that debauching a young woman is doing her an irreparable injury; but the business of *prostitution* could not have begun without it; and those who do seduce and ruin young women, are generally those who have previously formed habits of debauchery by their commerce with common prostitutes; and who have, by that means, acquired such a propensity to that indulgence, and withal so low an idea of the sex (from having had so much to do with the most abandoned part of it) that they are prepared for committing any outrage upon that most amiable and most defenceless part of our species. Even the marriage-bed will not long be held sacred by such persons; and indeed we see in

fact, that adultery never fails to accompany, or to succeed, a general dissoluteness of morals with respect to unmarried women. And certainly that cannot be no crime which leads to the commission of what is confessedly so.

Besides, no man begins the practice of fornication with thinking it to be no crime. And when, by the force of habit, and upon insufficient grounds, a man can persuade himself that what he once thought to be criminal, is not so, he is prepared for the same process with respect to another criminal action, and of a higher nature. And the force of conscience, in general, is weakened by every wilful transgression of what we think to be our duty. I believe that the number of women who are debauched by those who really intend to marry them at the time, is small in comparison with those who are seduced by persons who had no such intention; and if it were true, that the greater part of those who debauched them did first intend to marry them, but afterwards changed their design and deserted them, it would furnish a still stronger argument against any venereal indulgence before marriage.

3. As no man ever began the practice of fornication with thinking it to be no crime, so neither can he continue it without some sense of *shame*, at least with respect to the more decent and worthy persons of his acquaintance, whose characters

characters he most reveres ; and it is to be hoped that profligacy of manners in a christian country will never be so great, but that this species of licentiousness will be disreputable, so that a man who is addicted to it will be obliged to have recourse to disguise and concealment. No man, for instance, who has the least regard to the opinion of the world (by which ideas of decency, and the modes of politeness are regulated) will venture to bring his mistress into company with the same assurance as he would his wife. Now a man who has something to *conceal*, has always some thing to *fear*, and a detection would make him ashamed and confused ; and the state of mind which these suspicions and contrivances necessarily superinduce is debasing, and inconsistent with a perfect enjoyment of life. This unmixed happiness is most righteously appropriated by nature, and the God of nature, to the man of uniform and fearless integrity, whose conduct is such, that he has nothing to apprehend from the reproaches either of his own conscience, or of the world.

It is pretended that secret, though guilty pleasures, are sweet in consequence of being so, but a man's heart must be wretchedly depraved before he can be capable of the sentiment. On the contrary, it is the peculiar happiness of the married state, that the natural passions have their proper gratification without the interruption of the idea of shame or remorse, which with all minds, in which there are any remains

of ingenuity, greatly lessens the satisfaction; as with persons whose minds are in a perfectly right state, in consequence of a true and deeply rooted sense of virtue, it would embitter and destroy the satisfaction altogether, even at the time of enjoyment.

The man who gratifies his passions in no other way than the laws of nature and of his country authorize, feels that his mind is so far from being debased by the purest and most unallayed pleasures of sense, that his generous and benevolent affections are strengthened by them; and the pleasures and cares of a married life together finely improve his temper. They may almost be said to new-make the man, and render him capable of feeling and acting in a manner greatly superior to what he would otherwise have been capable of.

4. Whether it be acknowledged, or not, it is well-known to those who have sufficient acquaintance with life, to be unquestionably true, that the most valuable happiness of a man in this world is that which arises to him from domestic relations, the society of a wife and children; though a man who has not those connexions cannot possibly form a just idea of it. Now this most valuable stock of happiness is either wholly given up, or the worth of it greatly impaired by all venereal indulgence before marriage. No man who has addicted himself to a promiscuous commerce before marriage

age is capable of that perfect and entire affection for a wife and children, which a man naturally entertains who has had no illicit gratification of that kind. In a small degree the effect of this circumstance may not be perceived ; but the effect of a long-continued profligacy in this respect is exceedingly manifest, as it is often seen to end in the most dishonourable sentiments, and a confirmed contempt of the whole sex, with an utter and unconquerable aversion to marriage, or such an aptness to be disgusted with the necessary inconveniences of a married life, as to induce a husband readily to quit his wife for a mistress ; and when this is done, whatever politeness may dictate, the true and proper happiness of domestic life is over. Numberless examples, especially among the upper ranks of mankind, confirm these observations ; and the usual consequences in such cases are the extinction of families by celibacy, or the great disquiet and misery of the individuals connected under such unfavourable circumstances, living in continual jealousy and distrust.

As no man who has not been married can have a just idea of the proper satisfaction of the conjugal state, because it depends upon feelings and habits of mind, acquired after entering into that state, and in consequence of it ; so neither can the man who has indulged himself with a variety of women before, or after marriage, have any idea of the unallayed satisfaction

with which that man views his wife and children, who is conscious that he has lived to them only, having never had any other object of that kind of affection; and who, being entitled to it, can with confidence expect, a reciprocal and undivided affection.

By this means it is, and by this means only, that a foundation is laid for that strong attachment which men and their wives, who have lived virtuously and happily together, generally have for each other; an attachment which is not only often known to continue long after the period of venereal indulgence, but to go on increasing with age, even to extreme decrepitude.

This is finely expressed in the old song of Darby and Joan.

No beauty nor wit they possess,
 Their several failings to smother;
 Then what are the charms, can you guess,
 That make them so fond of each other?
 'Tis the pleasing remembrance of youth,
 The endearments which youth did bestow;
 The thoughts of past pleasure and truth,
 The best of our blessings below.

These traces for ever will last;
 No sickness or time can remove.
 For when youth and beauty are past,
 And age brings the winter of love,

A friend-

A friendship insensibly grows,
By reviews of such raptures as these ;
The current of fondness still flows,
Which decrepit old age cannot freeze.

Now, in fact, every act of venereal indulgence before marriage is a deduction from this most valuable stock of happiness, which every man has a prospect of securing to himself, by the proper government of his passions, and confining them to one object. But alas ! how many rashly throw into the vortex of youth, where it is quickly dissipated and lost, that which might last through life. In fact, it is the folly of the man who dissolved and swallowed a diamond of immense worth, which could have given him no real satisfaction, and which, if preserved and properly applied, might have been made subservient to innumerable excellent uses.

5. If, in consequence of unrestrained indulgence, a man should have children by more women than one (and every man should always lay his account with the natural and probable consequences of his actions) the evils resulting from it are manifest, and the embarrassment in which that circumstance will involve him, if he have the least sense of the duty of a parent, must be exceedingly great. Whatever distinction the laws of particular countries may make between wives and concubines, every man is under a natural and indispensable obligation to provide for the happiness of all his offspring.

In the eye of reason every child that owes it's birth to any person has an equal claim upon him. But how can he give equal and sufficient attention to all his children, legitimate and illegitimate, without exciting the jealousy and hatred of the different mothers ? and with what prospect of success can he endeavour to instil into their minds the principles of virtue and sobriety (which is certainly as much his duty as making provision for their comfortable settlement in the world) when he sets them such an example as this in his own conduct ?

Again, how can a man who has any remains of moral or humane feelings, bear to consider the condition into which he introduces his illegitimate children ? They will be looked on with disgust and aversion by his wife, her children, and all his other relations, as a disgrace to the family, if not a burden also. He himself will entertain similar sentiments towards them, in a greater or less degree. In consequence, their education will be miserably neglected, the world will treat them with scorn and insult, they will be cast out to associate with the meanest and most profligate persons, and doomed themselves to profligacy and wretchedness. At least this generally proves to be the case in fact.

6. The natural reason why, contrary to the custom of brute creatures, a man ought to be confined to one woman during their joint lives.

lives (besides the occasion there is for it, on account of the want of their care and attention to their children, even till they are considerably advanced in life) is, that a strong affection of *mind*, leading to a permanent *friendship*, constitutes the principal part of the tie in the human species; whereas brutes are not capable of so great a degree of refinement; and this mental attachment, in order to be of real value, must be undivided. We see, in fact, that, in the Eastern countries, where men avail themselves of their legal privilege of having several wives or concubines, *mutual affection* either has no place at all, so that their commerce is merely such as that of the brutes, or when a preference is given to one wife, the rest are a prey to envy, jealousy, and malice, which has often the most fatal effects both with respect to himself and them.

It would certainly be the best, if young men and women should never have any other attachments than those which are to continue through life; and therefore that the first passion, provided there be nothing imprudent in the connection, should not be interrupted, so that no person should ever have had more than one and the same object of this intire affection and esteem. But though this perfect chastity of thought and sentiment can seldom be expected, at least in both the parties, and especially that of the man, in the usual state of things in the world, we should endeavour to come as near to the standard

ard of perfection in this respect as we can ; and little obstacles, arising from inequality of fortune, &c. should be overlooked, for the sake of what is of so much greater value.

It must be acknowledged, however, that disappointments in love, as well as disappointments of any other kind, are often of excellent use in the discipline of the mind ; but this consideration should no more recommend them to our choice, than evils of any other kind, all of which, we have no reason to doubt, are subservient to the wisest and best purposes under the perfect moral government of God.

7. Parents are apt to be much alarmed at the thoughts of their sons marrying before they have acquired a fortune sufficient to maintain a wife and family in the manner in which themselves have lived ; but they do not consider that when men act upon this maxim, they generally defer marriage till it be too late for them to have any real enjoyment of it ; and when, in consequence of being long accustomed to a single life, they have contracted a disinclination to a change of it, except in such circumstances, with respect to fortune only, as makes it generally joyless and unhappy. Marriage without children, especially on account of age, as it does not answer the intention of nature in marriage, so neither is it possible that it should be attended with the proper satisfaction and happiness of that state.

Besides,

Besides, a man's happiness consists chiefly in the full exertion of his faculties, when it is not attended with anxiety about the real necessities of life; and a rising family is the greatest spur to diligence in the world; at the same time that the pleasures of it make all the labour sweet. What is more frequently observed than even great fortunes raised from nothing, on the one hand, and the little that is often made of very considerable fortunes, with which young men begin trade, on the other?

Industry and frugality seldom fail to raise a man in the world, and the enjoyment which he has in seeing his family and fortune both increasing in proportion to one another, is infinitely superior to any satisfaction that he could possibly have in bringing up children to a fortune already acquired to his hands. Also, when persons begin the world with nothing, or but a moderate competency, they have a constant motive to temperance as well as to industry; and this is both a great security to virtue, and a necessary foundation of real happiness.

The only objection that ought to be made to a man's marrying what is called *beneath himself*, respects *education* and *manners*, and not fortune; for if he continue to keep company in which his wife is awkward and embarrassed, whatever love there might be at the commencement of the engagement, he will certainly, at length become ashamed of her, and disgusted with

with her. But I see no sufficient objection to mere inequality of fortune, between persons of equal education, understanding, and knowledge of the world. It must be owned, however, that equality of fortune is likewise desirable, and ought to determine the choice when other circumstances, of more consequence, are equal.

It is a considerable objection to persons deferring marriage till they have acquired a fortune, and indeed to the acquisition of a great fortune, that there is often little affection and cordiality between very rich parents and their heirs; the father considering his heir, though his own son, with a degree of jealousy and disgust, and the son considering his father as he would do any other person who should keep him out of the possession of an estate; and this situation must be exceedingly unfavourable to domestic happiness.

On the other hand, the parental and filial affections have their natural and uncontrolled course, where the parent, by an exertion of industry and frugality, of which the son is a witness, does little more than put him into a favourable situation for maintaining himself. In this case, the father considers his son, not as one who is a burden upon him, and who, he suspects, wishes him out of the way, but as the staff and support of his declining years; and the son, always capable of being benefited by the counsel and advice of his aged parent, continually

tinually feels the obligation of supporting him, and making his last days comfortable. Also, yielding one another, as they in this case necessarily must do, mutual support through life, they will have that frequent *intercourse*, which the established modes of living hardly admit between parents and children in very high life, but which is absolutely necessary to a reciprocal and lasting affection.

This is one among the many advantages by which those which are on the side of riches are compensated, and by which, in the excellent constitution of nature, provision is made for an almost equality of real happiness in all the ranks of life. Much, indeed, might be done by the rich to obviate this inconvenience, as much may be done by the poor to remedy their respective inconveniences; but they seldom give themselves leisure to attend to it.

In this place I shall take the liberty to introduce some observations which relate to this subject from Dr. Priestley's *Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion*, Vol. 1. p. 92, &c.

“ The experience of ages testifies, that marriage, at a proper time of life, whereby one man is confined to one woman, is most favourable to health, and the true enjoyment of life. It is the means of raising the greatest number of healthy children, and of making the best provision for their instruction and settlement in life ;

life; which is sufficient to demonstrate the preference of this to every other mode of indulging our natural passions.

“ Marriage is, moreover, of excellent use as a means of transferring our affections from ourselves to others. We see, not in extraordinary cases only, but generally, in common life, that a man prefers the happiness of his wife and children to his own; and his regard for them is frequently a motive to such industry, and such an exertion of his powers, as would make him exceedingly unhappy if it were not for the consideration of the benefit that accrues to them from it. In many cases, we see men risking their lives, and even rushing on certain death in their defence. The same is also, generally, the attachment of wives to their husbands, and sometimes, but not so generally, the attachment of children to their parents.

“ It may be added, that when once a man's affections have been transferred from himself to others, even to his wife and children, they are more easily extended to other persons, still more remote from him, and that by this means he is in the way of acquiring a principle of general benevolence, patriotism, and public spirit, which persons who live to be old without ever marrying are not generally remarkable for. The attention of these persons having been long confined to themselves, they often grow more and more selfish and narrow spirited, so as to be
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actuated in all their pursuits by a joyless desire of accumulating what they cannot consume themselves, and what they must leave to those who, they know, have but little regard for them, and for whom they have but little regard.

“ A series of family cares (in which a considerable degree of anxiety and painful sympathy have a good effect) greatly improves, and, as it were, *mellows* the mind of man. It furnishes a kind of exercise and discipline, which eminently fits him for great and generous conduct; and, in fact, makes him a superior kind of being, with respect to the generality of those who have had no family connections.

“ On the other hand, a course of lewd indulgence, without family cares, sinks a man below his natural level. Promiscuous commerce gives an indelible vicious taint to the imagination, so that to the latest term of life those ideas will be predominant which are proper only to youthful vigour. And what in nature is more wretched, absurd, and despicable, than to have the mind continually haunted with the idea of pleasures which cannot be enjoyed, and which ought to have been long abandoned for entertainments more suited to years.

“ Besides, all the pleasures of the sexes, in the human species, who cannot absolutely sink themselves so low as the brutes, depend much upon *opinion*, or particular mental attachments,
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and consequently they are greatly heightened by sentiments of *love* and *affection*, which have no place with common prostitutes, or concubines, with whom the connection is only occasional, or temporary, and consequently slight. Those persons, therefore, who give themselves up to the lawless indulgence of their passions, besides being exposed to the most loathsome and painful disorders; besides exhausting the powers of nature prematurely, and subjecting themselves to severe remorse of mind, have not, whatever they may fancy or pretend, any thing like the real pleasure and satisfaction that persons generally have in the married state."

Before I conclude these observations, I shall add, that it is more in the power of the *ladies*, than of any thing that can be suggested to young men, either by myself, their friends, or their own reflections, to bring them into a right method of thinking and acting in this respect. Were it sufficiently known to young men that a commerce with the abandoned part of the sex would be a bar to their acceptance with the modest and worthy part of it, and that known profligacy in this respect would be real infamy, the end that I have in view would be effectually answered. But I am sorry to observe, that I cannot avail myself of an appeal to the conduct of the generality of young ladies, who have had what is called a *polite education*, in aid of my argument.

Whether

Whether they have learned this part of their morality from wretched modern plays, in which it is constantly inculcated, or from any other source, they do not seem to have any objection to a sutor on account of his illicit amours ; imagining perhaps that *a reformed rake will make the best husband* ; though, if there be any truth in the preceding observations, never was any maxim worse founded. If it were possible that a *rake*, as the word is generally understood, should be completely reformed, which, however, is very questionable, it is certain that he never can make a good husband ; or be a suitable object of the intire affection and confidence of a worthy woman, and a proper father to their common children.

Would this amiable part of our species only do themselves the justice, to insist upon the same strict chastity and honour with respect to men, which men universally insist upon with respect to them, our sex would, no doubt, be as virtuous as theirs, and they would make much better husbands and fathers than they now do. In countries where no object is made of the chastity of women before marriage, their morals in this respect are as dissolute as ours.

It gives me pain to lay any part of the profligacy of morals in young men to the charge of the ladies, whose own morals are so exemplary, and especially to hint, as I must do, that it is, in reality, owing to their having less delicacy in
this

this respect than men have. But each sex is naturally the tutor to the other, and by this aid vices are best reformed and virtues promoted.

THE CONCLUSION.

Reason and philosophy, which will always be made to lean to the side of inclination, do with many persons, give too much countenance to the licentiousness of the present age; but though men are short-sighted with respect to their true and ultimate happiness, the more wise and provident *parent of mankind* has been pleased to interpose his express authority in favour of those rules of conduct, which he knew to be of so much consequence to the real welfare of his offspring.

In the scriptures the irregular commerce of the sexes is forbidden in the most peremptory manner. "*Whoremongers as well as adulterers* (we read Heb. xiii. 4.) *God will judge.*" We are also expressly assured (1 Cor. vi. 9.) that "*neither fornicators nor adulterers shall inherit the kingdom of God.*" Yea so much purity is required of christians, Eph. v. 3, that "*fornication and all uncleanness is not to be so much as once named amongst us, neither filthiness, foolish talking, or obscene jesting; and we are forewarned that, because of these things the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience.*" The
apostle

apostle Peter also most earnestly and affectionately admonishes us on this subject. 1 Pet. ii. 11. “*Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as pilgrims and strangers, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.*”

A man who has any belief in revelation can have no doubt about the regulation of his conduct in this respect ; and therefore my principal object in the preceding considerations has been to shew that, even without any regard to the authority of God, a just knowledge of human nature and human life, should lead us to adopt the very same maxims of strict purity and chastity, which he has prescribed to us.

Let it be observed also, that the object of these considerations is the provision for a man's happiness in this life *upon the whole*, arising from intellectual as well as corporeal pleasures, so that though by keeping himself within the bounds of strict chastity, there should be even a certainty of a man's abandoning pleasures which would have done him no corporeal injury (tho' considering the painful, loathsome, and disgraceful diseases to which a licentious conduct frequently exposes a man, the chance is upon the whole against him even in this respect) yet he is a real gainer by the sacrifice, provided the loss be sufficiently compensated by mental satisfactions.

But

But religion demonstrates it to be our wisdom to make even greater sacrifices than these. For if, in consequence of conscientiously doing the will of God, though it should require the *mortification of our members that are of the earth*, and, in the expressive language of our Saviour, *the cutting off a right-hand, or plucking out a right-eye*, so that we have less enjoyment of this life upon the whole, we are assured of an abundant recompence at the resurrection of the just.

In other words, the true principles of *philosophy* encourage a man to persevere in a course of strict chastity, as well as in the practice of every other virtue, by the prospect of his thereby standing a better chance for a purer and more lasting enjoyment of this life; and *religion* assures him, that though, contrary to reasonable expectation, this chance should fail him, he shall not be a loser in the whole of his existence, or have any reason to repent of the resolution to which he has adhered.

T H E E N D.